

Name _____

Hour _____

FEDERALISTS V. ANTI-FEDERALISTS COMPARE CONTRAST

Directions: Below you will find information about the Federalists and Anti-Federalist views on the Constitution. Read the information and high light key points that each group makes about the Constitution. Also list any new vocabulary words and find their definition in the dictionary. Then read the information about Federalists and Anti-Federalists in your textbook on pages 249-252. Finally, using the notes from both readings, create a Double Bubble that compares the two sides of this issue

Constitution of the United States- Federalists v. Anti-federalists

After the Constitution was signed and approved by delegates of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, it had to be ratified by the states. As determined by Article VII of the Constitution, ratification required the approval of nine special state conventions. States that did not ratify the Constitution would not be considered a part of the Union and would be separate countries.

Passage of the Constitution by the states was by no means certain in 1787. Indeed, many people at that time opposed the creation of a federal, or national, government that would have power over the states. These people were called Anti-Federalists. They included primarily farmers and tradesmen and were less likely to be a part of the wealthy elite than were members of their opposition, who called themselves Federalists. The Anti-Federalists believed that each state should have a sovereign, independent government. Their leaders included some of the most influential figures in the nation, including **PATRICK HENRY** and **GEORGE MASON**, leading national figures during the Revolutionary War period. Many Anti-Federalists were local politicians who feared losing power should the Constitution be ratified. As one member of their opposition, **EDMUND RANDOLPH**, said, these politicians "will not cherish the great oak which is to reduce them to paltry shrubs."

The Federalists favored the creation of a strong federal government that would more closely unite the states as one large, continental nation. They tended to come from the wealthier class of merchants and plantation owners. Federalists had been instrumental in the creation of the Constitution, arguing that it was a necessary improvement on the ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION, the country's first attempt at unifying the states in a national political arrangement. Leaders among the Federalists included two men who helped develop the Constitution, **JAMES MADISON** and **ALEXANDER HAMILTON**, and two national heroes whose support would greatly improve the Federalists' prospects for winning, **GEORGE WASHINGTON** and **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**.

Between September 17, 1787, the day the Constitution was signed by the Constitutional Convention, and May 29, 1790, the day Rhode Island became the thirteenth and last state to ratify the Constitution, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists engaged in a fierce national debate on the merits of the Constitution. This debate occurred in meeting halls, on streets, and on the printed page. Both sides in the argument had a considerable following. Many of the questions raised remain with us today: What is the best form of government? What rights must the government protect? Which government powers should be granted to the states, and which to the federal government?

The Anti-Federalists The Anti-Federalists found many problems in the Constitution. They argued that the document would give the country an entirely new and untested form of government. They saw no sense in throwing out the existing government. Instead, they believed that the Federalists had over-stated the current problems of the country. They also maintained that the Framers of the Constitution had met as an elitist group under a veil of secrecy and had violated the provisions of the Articles of Confederation in the means selected for ratification of the Constitution.

In making their arguments, the Anti-Federalists often relied on the rhetoric of the Revolutionary War era, which stressed the virtues of local rule and associated centralized power with a tyrannical monarch. Thus, the Anti-Federalists frequently claimed that the Constitution represented a step away from the democratic goals of the American Revolution and toward the twin evils of monarchy and aristocracy. The Anti-Federalists feared that the Constitution gave the president too much power and that the proposed Congress would be too aristocratic in nature, with too few representatives for too many people. They also criticized the Constitution for its lack of a BILL OF RIGHTS of the kind that had been passed in England in 1689 to establish and guarantee certain rights of Parliament and of the English people against the king. Moreover, the Anti-Federalists argued that the Constitution would spell an end to all forms of self-rule in the states.

Many Anti-Federalists believed in a type of government that has been described as agrarian republicanism. Such a government is centered on a society of landowning farmers who participate in local politics. **THOMAS JEFFERSON** agreed with this view. He felt that the virtues of democratic freedom were best nurtured in an agrarian, or agricultural, society, and that with increasing urbanization, commercialization, and centralization of power would come a decline in political society and eventual tyranny. Unlike the Anti-Federalists, however, Jefferson supported the Constitution, although rather reluctantly. He was not strongly identified with the Federalist position and would eventually oppose the Federalists as a member of the DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN PARTY.

The Anti-Federalists also shared the feeling that so large a country as the United States could not possibly be controlled by one national government. One Pennsylvania Anti-Federalist, who signed his articles "Centinel," declared,

It is the opinion of the greatest writers, that a very extensive country cannot be governed on democratical principles, on any other plan than a confederation of a number of small republics, possessing all the powers of internal government, but united in the management of their foreign and general concerns.

... [A]nything short of despotism could not bind so great a [country] under one government.

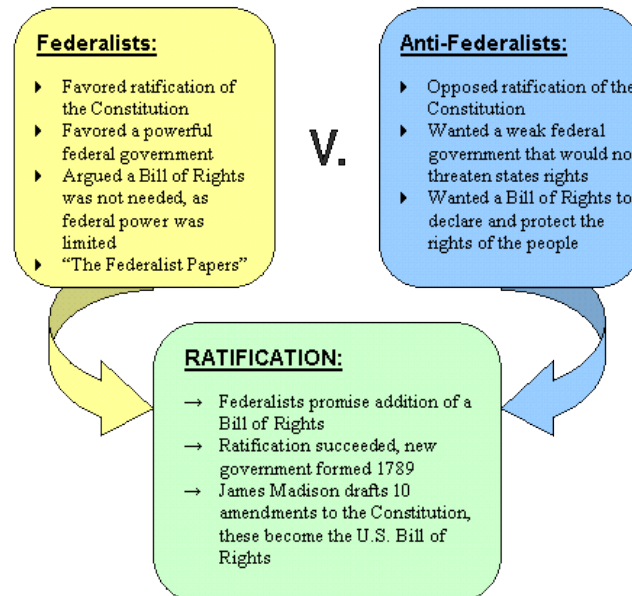
Although the Anti-Federalists were united in their opposition to the Constitution, they did not agree on what form of government made the best alternative to it. Some still believed that the Articles of Confederation could be amended in such a way that they would provide a workable confederation. Some wanted the Union to break up and re-form into three or four different confederacies. Others were even ready to accept the Constitution if it were amended in such a way that the rights of citizens and states would be more fully protected.

RATIFICATION DEBATES:

Immediately following the Constitutional Convention the delegates to Philadelphia brought the newly crafted Constitution to their home states for ratification (or approval). Most states held special ratification conventions, with elected officials representing counties or regions throughout the state. The New York ratifying convention was held in the city of Poughkeepsie.

While many of the smaller states quickly ratified the new Constitution, the debate in the two largest and most important states, New York and Virginia, raged on for months. The debate in New York was particularly divisive. The Constitutional supporters, the Federalists, took the debate into the public forum of the press, publishing a series of pro-ratification essays collectively known as the Federalist Papers. While the Federalist Papers were simply signed "Publius" they were the work of Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay and they still stand today as some of the greatest commentary on the meaning and intent of the Constitution's chief authors.

The Anti-Federalist opposition to ratification was strong and while all of the states eventually accepted the new government, states such as Virginia and Massachusetts did so only after attaching recommendations concerning the addition of a Bill of Rights. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution were added soon after ratification and became the U.S. Bill of Rights and stand as the Anti-Federalists greatest contribution to the Constitution they so opposed.



FEDERALIST V. ANTI-FEDERALIST DOUBLE BUBBLE

